

**DDS-South Region
Regional Advisory and Planning Council
Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2009**

Members Present: Vice Chair John (Jack) Frost, April Dipollina, Steven Fusti, Nancy Kalal, Danielle Shepard, Claire White, Kim Wollschleager, and Mary McKay, RD DDS South/Ex-Officio Member.

Members Absent: Marianne Burke and Michael Del Sole.

Guests: Jill Hall and Carol Cooney.

I. Vice Chairperson's Report

Call to Order - Vice Chair Frost called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

Citizen Comment - At the request of Ms. Cooney, Ms. McKay provided an overview of the Level of Need (LON) tool. The new LON is an electronic tool linked to algorithms that produces a score on the degree of services an individual needs. The case manager administers an LON questionnaire to the consumer annually, at a minimum. The responses are then transferred to the electronic application, which as previously stated, yields a score indicative of the individuals needs. Families should be given an opportunity to provide input on the LON.

Next, Ms. Cooney expressed her concern over the letter she received from DDS wherein she was informed that her brother, a DDS consumer in an ICF/MR facility, will lose CM services effective 7/1/09 because of the number of case managers retiring. Losing the coordination, contact, oversight and guidance of an assigned CM is extremely unsettling to families. In response, Ms. McKay affirmed that this was a very difficult decision and described the thinking behind DDS' decision to cut CM services to certain populations. ICF-MRs are required by regulation to provide services similar to that of a DDS CM to their clients through the QMRP aka service coordinator. The majority of the other consumers affected, children, by law are the responsibility of the lead educational agency. It is important to note that DDS will continue to offer family supports and respite services to these individuals and that when the consumer becomes eligible for Medicaid, CM services will be instated. Each Region will establish a call center to assist families and process referrals. Information will be posted to the DDS website as it becomes available. Until that time, families are encouraged to contact the IFS Division in their Region for assistance.

Next, Ms. Jill Young, a parent of a consumer and guest at tonight's meeting, expressed her interest in joining the council.

Review of Minutes - Members reviewed the minutes of the May 20, 2009. In the presence of a quorum, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2009, meeting as presented to the meeting.

Statewide Council on Developmental Services Update – Mr. Frost gave an update on the last mtg. of the Statewide Council on Developmental Services. An end of the legislative session update was disseminated and reviewed. DDS is particularly pleased with the passing of **S.B. No. 756**, which allows for a check of the DCF child abuse and neglect registry for applicants of employment with DDS or its providers and **S.B. No. 301**, An Act concerning health insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders. A comprehensive session update will be available through Christine Pollio's office soon and posted to the DDS website under Legislative Affairs.

Mr. Frost said that discussions on how to get the job done with less dominated the Council's last meeting. A former Council member attended the meeting to urge the Council to do what it could to reinstate case management services to all DDS consumers. She spoke of case managers' proposals to increase caseloads and reported on a press conference recently held at the LOB wherein families and case managers advocated against cuts in services. Ms. Dipollina asked Ms. McKay to review the CMs' proposal and discuss the reasons DDS could not agree to it. After losing over 40 case managers to retirement, to divide 3000 consumers across the remaining case managers would be difficult at best. DDS believes that core functions of case management, including the annual plan, regular consumer contact, and quality reviews, must be maintained for the existing caseload.

II. Regional Director's Updates

Budget Update – The legislative session officially ended on 6/3 without a budget, and it was hoped that through special session there would be a budget by 6/30. However there appears to be no budgetary resolution in site. If there is still no budget by the end of next week, the Department will receive an emergency appropriation for one month. Due to this, it is likely that the cash we've used in past years to provide bridge funding to grads during this period may not be available. In anticipation of this, DDS has sent letters to effected families encouraging each to establish a back-up plan through October. A very small pool of funding will be available to families with the most urgent of needs. DDS' budgetary situation is further complicated by the sunset of the five-year Wait List

Settlement Agreement. This means the end of the annual infusion of mandated Wait List Funding going forward.

Retirement Plans - To date 399 confirmed retirees statewide with 21 still considering. The Governor has placed a hard freeze on hiring, which means that vacated positions will be abolished. The department continues to provide services through reassignments, overtime, and nursing pools. If we receive permission from OPM to refill positions, nurses and case managers will take priority. The Regional Director recently held staff meetings around the Region in order to keep staff abreast of changes with the Department.

Case Management Realignment/Coverage – While it is difficult to plan for the future with so many unknowns, the Department is taking steps to identify both interim and long-term plans in this area. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, a direct line of communication with non-Medicaid consumers and families is being established through the development of a call center line. Call center staff will track and triage incoming calls while family support team members will assist with follow-up on incoming inquiries.

Family Forums – There was a good turnout at the recently held SR Spring Family Forums. Many of the families who attended had received the “No CM letter.”

Postponement of 7/1 Fee for Service Rate Implementation – DDS’s plans to transition to a Fee for Service Rate have been postponed. Bills introduced to pilot the conversion and do it “on paper” have been raised. Consumers who exercise portability or receive new day services will continue to do so on the new rate system however others will not be converted at this time.

III. Discussion Items

Ideas for how we can help relieve the pressure families are experiencing – The Council generated a number of ideas for providing families, particularly those without case managers, with additional supports during this challenging time. Included are:

- Create DDS parent to parent support groups
- Hold specialized workshops (i.e. navigating DSS)
- Collaborate with the FSN
- Recruit and formally organize a group of volunteers willing to serve as 1:1 mentors with families
- Post to the DDS website a list of volunteers and their contact information
- Seek family input on what to do with our funding once the budget is passed
- Post to the DDS website a list of retirees to the DDS website
- Strengthen communication between DDS and school districts
- Create a blog on the DDS Website

IV. Old Business

Nomination of Officers – Claire White, Nancy Kalal, Kim Wollschleager and Danielle Sheppard were nominated for the offices of Chair, Vice-Chair and Co-Secretary respectively.

In the presence of a quorum, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the nomination of officers as presented to the meeting effective this day, June 26, 2009.

V. New Business

At this time, Ms. Cooney shared her interest in becoming a member of the council.

Per the Council's request, the Regional Director will recommend to Commissioner O'Meara the appointment of Jill Hall and Carol Cooney to this council.

VI. Adjournment

With no further business before the Council, Vice Chair Frost adjourned the meeting at 7:45 PM.

VII. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the DDS-South Region Advisory and Planning Council will be held on September 23 at 6pm at the Henry Carter Hull Library in Clinton, CT.

Minutes Submitted By:

Jolie Crescimano-Goss

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